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ABSTRACT

This new method for teaching college English in India is based on prior assumptions but is given a justification and a methodological framework previously lacking. The method, which lies somewhere between the manipulative control and regimentation employed at the school level and the total freedom of the existing college method, is described in three parts: (1) the organization of the materials, (2) the teacher's presentation, and (3) the exercises and practice by the students. The linguistic and literary qualities that reading texts should reflect in order to encourage the habit of reading and develop reading skills are listed. Suggestions are made for: (1) motivating the students to read, (2) improving reading speed and comprehension, (3) handling special vocabulary and problems of syntax, (4) writing exercises for the students, (5) leading oral discussions based on the reading, (6) expanding vocabulary skills, and (7) preparing grammar exercises based on the reading. Suggestions for written work, which should reinforce the oral activities and be part of every class, are also offered. (PMJ)

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Rationalising College English Methodology: a student-activated, study-learning method for adolescents

BIKRAM K. DAS

I. Background

1. The Importance of a College Methodology for the Teaching of English.

The methodology of English teaching has hitherto been of concern only to those connected with the school system. College and University Departments of English showed no interest in pedagogics until recently.

The first significant change came with the launching, in 1965*, of the U.G.C. Summer Institutes in English Language Teaching. After the publication of the reports of the two Study Groups appointed by the Government of India, in 1965 and 1969, more Departments of English began to take notice of methods. Several universities, influenced by current thinking on language methodology, introduced changes in their syllabuses and examinations, but they soon realised that teachers who had no orientation to teaching methods were even less effective under the new system than under the old. The fact that the All India Conference of English Teachers has been able, for some years, to devote a part of its deliberations to English methodology is proof of its growing respectability.

Today, the teaching of English at the undergraduate level has a crucial importance. The two Study Groups referred to above have

*It may be mentioned here that as early as 1962 the Central Institute of English, Hyderabad, had organised Summer Institutes in the Teaching of English Language and Literature at the College level. These may have paved the way for the U.G.C. Institutes.

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discussed this topic at length, and there is no need to repeat what they have already said. A few points may, however, be emphasised:

(1) The ***transition*** between the school stage and subsequent stages of higher, professional and vocational education is particularly important. This has been recognised in the replacement of the (11+3) years pattern by the (10+2+2) pattern. There is need for an effective ***bridge*** between the school stage and the other specialised stages.

(2) The function of the post-school (undergraduate) stage as an educational bridge is particularly relevant in the case of English.

For a long time to come, higher as well as professional and vocational education will require the use of, and a certain proficiency in, the English language. While this minimum proficiency ***ought*** to be achievable by the end of the school level, it is becoming increasingly clear that this may not be possible. Students leaving school will show greater diversity in their levels of achievement in English, due largely to the fact that the emphasis on the teaching of English will vary from one region to another. Some students may, for example, come to undergraduate classes with practically no English at all, and expect to go on to other stages where the skills of English ***will*** be required.

While we do hope that the teaching of English at the school stage will improve, it is obvious that the teaching at the college level will ***have*** to take on at least a part of the responsibility of ensuring that students get the English ***which they are going to need later.***

In any case, the student is likely to experience a real and immediate ***need*** for English only *after* he leaves school, and it should be easier to identify his need, and cater to it *at* the transitional level.

The current philosophy about the teaching of English is that it can be more effective when directly linked to *specific*—rather than generalised—learners' needs. Probably, the crucial factor is the sharpness and urgency of the learner's own motivation : the more clearly he sees and feels the need, the greater the likelihood of his learning the language. Once again, this points to a greater emphasis on teaching at the transitional stage.

Teachers of English must themselves possess an adequate mastery of the lanauage, since they provide the model for their pupils. Most teachers at the school level do not possess this linguistic equipment, and they are

never able to devote themselves to English as a specialised discipline. At the college level there is a greater possibility of the teacher's being able to help the student with the English that he needs, provided he knows how to go about it.

2. The Traditional Methodology for College English

The college teacher of English does not normally follow any 'method'—he does what appears to him 'natural', or imitates his own teachers.

Traditionally, the teaching of English at the college level has been based on :

(i) the study of selected literary texts;

(ii) lectures on these texts;

(iii) notes produced by students based on the lectures or on their collateral reading.

'Literary' texts have come to mean : representative writings by established 'masters', selected as much on considerations of literary history as for intrinsic value. Even at the undergraduate level, the approach to English teaching tends to be historical and rhetorical.

The teaching (as well as the examination) emphasises the *content* of the texts : the thoughts, beliefs, value-systems, attitudes, emotions etc., which they represent. There is also some attempt at fostering aesthetic and critical discrimination.

Since the texts prescribed are mostly 'new' as far as the culture and content are concerned, and difficult linguistically, nearly all the teaching is devoted to paraphrasing and explication of text material.

The objectives behind this traditional literary text-lecture method of teaching are nowhere explicitly stated ; yet, conceivably, the objectives *could* be :

(i) stimulating and building up the habit of reading extensively as well as with attention ;

(ii) developing a sharper response to the use of language (a 'feel' for the language, a 'sense of style'); refining the skills of comprehension and 'appreciation';

(iii) encouraging and developing the skills of expression—in writing and (perhaps) in speech—through exposure to good models of the language.

The much-maligned 'literature-lecture' method has been accused of ignoring the language skills altogether. There is no doubt, however, that it can and often does lead to the development of some language skills. The process of absorption and unconscious imitation, involving memory and association, does result in some language learning, though this process is less predictable and controllable than planned and organised language teaching based on pedagogical principles. We believe, therefore, that the traditional kind of teaching has *some* value in language learning and does serve certain language-learning objectives.

The other objectives, which often get more attention than the above, are :

(iv) introducing the major writers and literary movements of English ;

(v) widening cultural and intellectual horizons ;

(vi) providing a humanistic and mental discipline: inculcating desirable values, attitudes, improving mental alertness, etc.

In addition to the literature component, there is also a language component to the teaching of English at the college level. Traditionally, the writing of essays and paragraphs, summarising and precis writing, translation, etc. formed the language 'paper'. For some years now, there has been a tendency to include some grammar and usage in the language paper.

Although the language element is included, it serves only to balance the pattern of examination and not to improve the language ability of the student. It does not really form a part of ***teaching***. Language is supposedly taught in tutorial groups but the organisation of tutorial work is seldom satisfactory. Even here, much of the time is devoted to assignments on the texts—and again, it is the content of the text that is emphasised. The teacher expects the student to write correct English, and marks him down

for errors of grammar. But he has absolutely no idea of how to eliminate these errors, or to improve the quality of writing.

As has been said above, several universities have introduced, at the undergraduate level, what they fondly term 'language-oriented' syllabuses. This is done out of a vague feeling that 'more emphasis should be given to language'. Textbooks designed for language learning, produced by writers such as Hornby, Hill, and others are selected and prescribed. These books are meant to be *worked through*—instead, they are *lectured on*, because the teacher does not know what else to do with them! Since the books were not written to support scholarly lectures in the first place, the lecturer finds it impossible to lecture on them interestingly, and complains that the textbooks are bad!

II. A Proposal for a 'new' Methodology

There is nothing really 'new' in any methodology. All good teaching is supported by some commonly accepted beliefs and practices. Although teaching methodology is being constantly fed with new developments in the social and mental sciences, as well as in technology, the basic assumptions are never invalidated.

It is important that whatever is good in the existing college methodology—and there is much that is good—be preserved. We have, however, to evolve a clear outline for the methodology and give it a justification and a rationale. To the methodologist, a 'method' represents a reliable taxonomy of objectives, (i.e., what precisely needs to be done), a detailed analysis of the means whereby these objectives can be achieved, and an operational plan for achieving the specified objectives through the selected means. The method must also have a built-in evaluation or quality-control system to keep a constant check on the objectives, the means, and their application.

The traditional methodology has lacked such a framework. It has attempted things without knowing why it has attempted them—often without realising what it has attempted. There are important things which it has not attempted at all, or attempted only half-heartedly.

One good thing about college methodology has been its lack of dogma. While school methodology has often been narrowly prescriptive and cramping, college teaching—at its best—has been creative and imaginative, and has allowed a lot of freedom to the teacher. A method does not mean

a set ritual ; by its very nature it must be flexible and open, because a good method is always sensitive to the environment in which teaching and learning are taking place—and, as any teacher knows, this environment is constantly changing.

III. The Philosophy of the College Methodology

At the college level we deal with adolescents, whose attitudes to learning in general, and the learning of English in particular, are complicated by psychological and sociological pressures.

At the school level, the emphasis is on *teaching*. The teacher is very much the master of the situation : he decides what is to be done to produce learning, in what manner, how often and for how long. He is in charge of a highly structured and organised process. He is the manipulator, the controller.

No one is certain exactly how a language is learnt. The great controversy today is whether the process of language learning is one of conditioning, i.e., of automatic habit-formation, or of cognition and concept-formation. It seems to be a combination of both. There is no doubt that memory and association play an imporatant part in language learning; equally, it seems probable that the learner proceeds by making certain generalisations, in his own mind, regarding whatever he is learning. For the teacher, this involves a dualistic approach. Firstly, he has to provide opportunities for the learner to form associative bonds between words and sentences in the target language, and the situations or contexts in which they are used. He has to present the items of language in meaningful situations (usually created in the class) and repeat this presentation until a strong associative bond has been formed between the language item and its situational or contextual meaning—that is, until the language item has been fixed, or *established*. In establishing the language item, the teacher can often, with advantage, offer explanations which help the learner in perceiving the pattern or principle involved. This forms the cognitive part of the learning.

But establishing the item through frequent repetition in context, with or without explanation, is not enough. This forms only the first phase—the initial *presentation* by the teacher. This must be followed up by practice or *exercise*. Essentially, language is a form of activity, and it is learnt *through* activity. One learns to speak by speaking and to write by writing : there is no substitute. The more one is made to speak or write the better the

chances of his learning to do so. What really produces learning therefore is the opportunity provided to the learner to practise what he is learning. Here again, practice has to be intelligent and creative rather than mechanical, though mechanical *drill* does have a certain value.

For the learner, this exercise is most productive when it is accompanied by some form of reward. This may simply be the satisfaction derived from doing the right thing—or, it may be a more tangible kind of reward, such as a prize. At any rate, the learner needs to be told that he is doing the right thing : he needs confirmation. Negatively, he could be told when he was *not* doing the right thing—but the positive kind of confirmation produces a sense of achievement and acts as a great motivating influence on learning.

The actual teaching, therefore—that is, the process of interaction between the teacher and the learner—consists largely in the spaced, controlled, meaningful repetition of language items, with confirmation of learning. Any good teaching method must contain all these ingredients.

The operative word, at the school level, is 'controlled'. Everything is, or should be, controlled. The amount of language to be presented is controlled; the sequence of teaching items is controlled; the amount of practice is controlled. The process of language teaching is, very briefly, a process of gradual and progressive relaxation of controls, culminating in total freedom. Ultimately, we want the learner to be able to use language independently and efficiently in most real-life situations, to fulfill most of his needs for language. The process of teaching must prepare him for this—it must give him the language ability that he is likely to need later.

The learner at the school level (some writers use the word 'pupil' to describe him, as distinct from the 'student'—the more mature learner at the college level) is used to a lot of control. He expects a certain kind of framework in which teaching takes place: a certain kind of textbook, a certain classroom arrangement and environment, a certain kind of activity which he himself is expected to perform. The methodology for school level English has, for a long time, been emphasising *oral* presentation and practice in the target language, which involves a lot of brisk classroom activity both by the teacher and the student. (This method, known to teachers vaguely as 'the Structural Approach', is often observed in the breach—but teachers do at least pay lip-service to it.)

The situation at the college level is, or has been, different. There is little control here. The language used in the textbooks and by the teacher

in the classroom shows little control. It is the kind of language that is used in real life : in books, in periodicals, talks, speeches, etc. It may, in fact, be a more 'difficult' kind of language than is found in real life, since it is taken, often, from imaginative, creative writing. (The language used in a 'controlled' teaching situation is, on the other hand, an artificial kind of language—a simplified, diluted version of the language as it exists outside the classroom.)

There is no control over the student's activity. He is *expected* to read, listen, write and, occasionally, speak—but no one really insists on his doing all this.

The teacher's own activity is free from controls. He does not teach according to any set procedure. He does not feel that he is responsible for his students, in the sense of having to make sure that they benefit or learn from his teaching. (His only responsibility is completing the syllabus.) To him, the student is a mature individual, free to accept or not to accept, to learn or not to learn.

Thus it is obvious that at the college level there cannot be the same emphasis on *teaching* that there is at the school level : it is *learning* that is more crucial here. The adolescent college student *expects* to be treated like a mature, self-respecting adult. One can expect him to resent any attempt to impose on him a kind of teaching that may remind him of his school environment. The new entrant to college is usually very conscious of the status he has just acquired : to him, it is an important change. The Indian student, who has been exposed at school to several years of a particular kind of teaching of English, will usually not be reconciled to the same kind of teaching at college. He might even find this derogatory to his self-respect. (Paradoxically, if he were not an adolescent but an adult, with an adult's motivation, he would not mind being treated like a child if he felt that this was resulting in his learning something.) The great difficulty in evolving a satisfactory English methodology for college is that one is dealing with students who may have the language ability (in English) of infants, but have near-adult mental maturation. The usual language-teaching techniques, which produce excellent results with school children, might not work at the college level. This is true also of the materials used to teach language. The college student may react unfavourably to the sort of English text usually prescribed for a learner at his *linguistic* level, because at this level of language (say, within a 1500 word vocabulary) one cannot produce very interesting texts, whereas the students'

mental maturation demands that his texts be more interesting and sophisticated.

The undergraduate student of English suffers from a delayed childhood, as far as his ability in the language is concerned. Linguistically, he is still at school, but one cannot send him back to school to learn the language. There cannot be a simple transfer of the school methodology to the college environment.

A methodology for College English must lie somewhere between the manipulative control and regimentation of the school method and the total freedom of the usual college method. It must ensure that the learner learns what we want him to learn, but it must also cater to his newly-acquired feeling of independence and maturity, and to his level of interests.

Although we want the student to learn fairly elementary skills and language items in English, we might think of the activity, at his end, as *study* rather than *learning*—or more accurately, a combination of the two. Basically, study is a self-motivated, independent activity, while learning is manipulated by some agency outside the learner. The distinction may be rather fine, because even study may be directed by an instructor—while learning itself may take the form of self-instruction. (It should be noted, however, that the so-called 'auto-instructional' programmes are highly manipulative of the learner; instead of a teacher one has a programme-writer.) Or one might think of study as directed to the development of higher-order mental powers and abilities; learning, to the acquisition of more basic skills frequently, but not necessarily, connected with the neuro-muscular system. The process of language 'learning' must be, as we have said, a complex one involving conscious thinking processes as well as mechanical skills. It is difficult, in fact, to separate 'pure' language-learning objectives from extra-linguistic objectives. To what extent for example, is the skill of reading with comprehension a language skill? How much of intelligence does it involve?

The techniques leading to language learning are essentially based on presentation and practice; those leading to study are based on independent reading, consulting of reference sources, discussion and analysis (both oral and written). The benefits obtained from such activity will not be linguistic alone—but there will be linguistic benefits undoubtedly. The language-activities involved are : reading, comprehending, speaking and writing—and each of these, performed frequently and under supervision, will lead to the development of language skills.

The role of the teacher here is complex. Essentially, he has to be an initiator, a supporter, co-ordinator and guide for language-learning activity *by the student.* The importance of student 'participation' or activity is something that all teachers realize : all the textbooks on school methodology mention 'activity-learning', the 'project-method', etc. It is true that, in general, students learn better by *doing* things than by being *told* about things. But what may be only an added frill or refinement in the teaching of the social sciences, forms the very heart of language pedagogy. In jargon which college teachers will easily recognize : student participation is not merely a desirable qualification but an essential one ! In fact, the term 'student participation' is misleading as it suggests that the teacher is the main actor and the student only the supporting audience. In fact, the student fills the actor's role, with occasional help from the teacher. It would be more accurate to speak of 'teacher participation' in the classroom !

The method we advocate, therefore, has student activity as its first and most important element. We should like to reiterate that there is nothing new about this. What is different is the emphasis on activity appropriate to adolescent students—a more independent, self-supporting kind of activity, incorporating study techniques such as discussion, interpretation, presentation etc.

We advocate a 'multi-skill' approach, but with the emphasis on reading and writing, particularly on reading. We believe that English is needed primarily as *the* library-language, and hence, at the college level, the stress has to be on cultivating the abilities of independent reading and study, including the use of reference-techniques. Reading (silently) with attention and comprehension is the main activity we require of the student, and this forms the main 'technique' for use in the classroom. One could loosely think of this method as a reading method, except that 'reading' does not indicate the full range of student activity involved. We would insist, for example, on reading being followed by oral discussion and language-exercise and in many cases being preceded too by oral work. In oral activity, the emphasis is on comprehension, correctness and appropriateness of expression and not on phonetic accuracy. We believe in oral activity as a support for reading and writing, as also an aid to habits of discussion and analytical thinking. We believe that the student should be encouraged to speak a kind of English (when he speaks at all) which would be free from glaring regional features and idiosyncracies-but we feel that in the usual college classroom situation

it is not really possible for the teacher to give effective pronunciation practice, whereas our method is concerned with what *can* be done even in a fairly large class (of a maximum of 80 students : more than this would turn the 'class' into a crowd!) The usual argument is that language practice is not possible in the 'general' class, but we believe that it *is*. There is no doubt that small tutorial groups (of about 10) are best for intensive and effective practice. Where it is possible to arrange for such groups they should be fully utilised to secure as much language-activity as possible. But where such arrangements are not possible, the 'general' class itself can and must be made use of. Initially, at least, language activity is likely to be restricted to whatever is done in the classroom, in the presence of the teacher — though one of the objectives of teaching is to persuade the student to carry on such activity, by himself, even outside the classroom. In most cases, however, students will not undertake such activity outside the classroom unless they are exceptionally motivated or greatly influenced by the teacher. It may take some time and effort to get the students to co-operate with the teacher by doing the required reading or writing at home, as a preparation for, or follow-up of, class work. In our view, therefore, it is unwise to depend too much on any method which involves a lot of work by students outside the classroom, or outside the prescribed texts — at least, at the initial stages. This is unfortunate, because we can almost certainly not give the student as much practice in class as we would like to — and he needs all the practice he can get. Teachers of English can demand, and perhaps get, more classroom time. But one of the essentials of good methodology is the acceptance of actual conditions and adjustment of the method to these conditions. We must ask ourselves : what is the best that can be done under existing conditions — though the continuous endeavour to *improve* conditions must never be given up.

Ideally, each individual learner should be able to get the practice he needs — but again, this is nearly impossible under existing conditions. Group practice has been suggested as a viable alternative to individualized teaching at the college level. Dr. Jean Forrester has made concrete suggestions, in her book ***Teaching Without Lecturing*** for the use of group techniques to inculcate the different language skills, and the college teacher would be well advised to acquaint himself with them. Many of these techniques are admirable, and they make excellent use of the co-operative and competitive spirits that exist in all learners. It is doubtful, however, whether all the language activities advocated by Dr. Forrester could be undertaken at the college level. The method she advocates

appears to be largely an extension of the school method, with the same emphasis on controlled learning. However, her book was probably th. first sustained attempt to discuss problems of College English.

We have been emphasising the importance of securing student activity in the classroom, but we are aware of the difficulties involved in this. Students are often unco-operative, either because of shyness or indifference. Many of them would prefer to let the teacher do all the work. Students who are used to lecturing do not, at first, like any method which requires *them* to do most of the work; frequently, they complain that the teacher is not *teaching*. But in most cases they begin to enjoy the activity, which is a new experience for them. They also realise, before long, that they are beginning to *improve* — to speak and write better.

Most students enter college as under-achievers in English. They find the level at which teaching is pitched beyond their abilities, and soon lose interest in it. The teacher complains that the students are indifferent, and begins to ignore them. He does not realise that for such a student, language learning becomes a frustrating and self-defeating process. Each time he attempts to speak, to answer a question in the class, he exposes himself to ridicule (to which the teacher also contributes!) Naturally, he tends to avoid all language activity, and withdraws into his shell. For such a student, teaching seems to offer no prospect of learning, no hope of improvement. If, however, it is visibly demonstrated to him that he *can* learn, can improve by taking part in the classroom activity, he becomes eager to do so. Nothing succeeds like success: a little achievement encourages the student to greater effort, with correspondingly greater achievement, and so on. This is a principle which the teacher must employ when he uses any language activity in the classroom. He must give the student confidence in his own ability to learn and to improve, by setting him tasks which are not beyond him initially — and progressively intensifying the demands made on him.

College teachers often complain that their students are too far below the expected standards. Pedagogically, this is pure nonsense. We cannot sustain artificial standards by prescribing difficult textbooks, delivering learned lectures on them and setting difficult examinations. It is the entry-level of the student which determines the level of teaching. If the teacher finds his students at a lower level than the one he expects, he must first descend to *their* level and lead them, by easy stages, up the language slope.

There is one last observation to be made before we conclude this discussion of the philosophy (or philosophies) underlying our method, and come to the actual techniques which we wish to recommend. It is sometimes said that student-activity very easily turns into indiscipline, and therefore any method based on such activity cannot be sustained. Some college teachers have confessed that they lecture to their students in order to over-awe them into silence! The more 'learned' and remote the lecture, the more difficult the student finds it to interrupt. No one would seriously maintain, however, that the lecture should be used to bludgeon the refractory student into submission If our method will not work in the extreme circumstances known to exist in many colleges, we submit that no other method will work either! Many of the difficulties of the English teacher are difficulties that *all* teachers face. No change in the methodology of English teaching will remove these difficulties, unless there are extensive changes not only in academic life generally but in the total structure and tone of national life. No purpose will be served here by discussing these wider problems, which are not professional problems peculiar to the teacher of English at the college level.

The proposed College Methodology in outline.

Basically, three aspects of language teaching methodology are most relevant :

1) the organisation of teaching materials;
2) the teacher's presentation;
3) the exercise and practice by students.

We shall describe our method under these three heads.

1) *The organisation of materials.* The total design of a language course is important. A course may be designed for general proficiency, or for a special kind of proficiency, to suit a special purpose (e.g., a course in English for students of Commerce, Agriculture, etc.)

Since we visualise the undergraduate English course as a bridge or transitional course, it is designed as basically a general proficiency course. The materials used should, therefore, be of a general nature, and not geared to any professional 'register' of English.

For some years, the CIEFL has been preparing and propagating a 'Language through Literature' course. This makes use of reading texts which might loosely be described as 'literary'. In the selection of these

texts, however, the course-designer and textbook producer are influenced by the following considerations:–

(a) The texts selected should represent contemporary English. Our approach is not historical and rhetorical; we do not wish to introduce our students to the literary landmarks, but to expose them to the living language, as it exists today.

(b) The 'literary' qualities we value chiefly are: lucidity, precision and 'liveliness'.

(c) The texts should be interesting, informative and thought-provoking. We want our students to be made aware of the contemporary civilization, of the environment in which they must live and grow up.

Some of the themes which may be relevant are: general science and technology, developments in the social sciences, current events, history, etc.

We would also like to include essays, belles-lettres, fiction, etc. in the contemporary mode, to stimulate facility in the imaginative and creative use of language.

(d) The texts should not be completely strange or alien culturally, but they should introduce other cultures and environments.

(In addition to language controls, cultural controls have to be exercised in the selection of texts.)

(e) Most important, however, is the control of the language of these texts.

We want the student to progress from controlled to independent language activity. The reading texts should, therefore, be of three kinds:

(i) simplified and, if necessary, adapted texts, written to a 1,500 word vocabulary. These texts would present no linguistic difficulties to the student, and he could work through them briskly and proceed to the next stage.

(ii) texts written to a 3,500 word-vocabulary: either adapted or rewritten.

The linguistic control exercised would be *partial*. New vocabulary would be introduced in a planned way; the density of new words would not be too high.

Such texts would contain a lot of editorial help for the student, as an aid to independent study: word glosses, annotations, background material, summaries, etc.

(iii) original texts, selected for appropriateness of content, without any manifest language control.

These would be of a type the student might expect to encounter in free reading.

By the time the student was introduced to these texts he would have had plenty of exercise in comprehension and usage. He would, presumably, be in a position to read independently, using a dictionary and other reference materials.

The kinds of texts envisaged here would not require close textual study. (We do not, however, favour the term 'non-detailed study', which is usually a synonym for 'non-serious study'.)

The main purpose in prescribing these texts would be to encourage the *habit* of reading, to develop the reading skills, and to help in the acquisition of an adequate *reading* vocabulary.

But to what extent can reading texts designed to serve the objectives above be used to achieve the *active* control of grammar and vocabulary which one needs for the skills of expression, either in speech or writing? In particular, how much grammar can be mastered through the use of these materials?

Usually, 'Language through Literature' texts have some kind of grammatical control and are designed to introduce and present selected grammatical patterns in context. There is nothing like an itemised, graded list of 'structures' at the college level: all the 'basic' grammar has, presumably, been introduced by the end of the school stage and here the aims are remediation and consolidation, with some 'new' patterns being introduced.

We have reason to believe that a good 'reading' text cannot also be a good 'grammar-teaching' text: the aims and methodologies for the two are different. If the intention is to provide for the 'text-based'

teaching of grammar—and we believe this is the most effective approach—there should be, in addition to the reading-texts, a text especially designed and written to provide repetitive practice and exercise in grammar. Probably a workbook, containing a number of 200–250-word passages, would be the answer. Each passage would be written around a pattern or number of patterns, which it would illustrate, with adequate repetition.

(2) *Teacher's Presentation*

The 'presentation' (of language to be learnt) is done not by the teacher but by the reading-text.

The teacher's function is to prepare the student for the activity of reading.

He has, first of all, to motivate the student to undertake this activity, to put him in the proper frame of mind for reading.

Motivation Several techniques may be used to motivate the student:-

(*a*) *Introductory exposition*

The teacher introduces the text by talking about it interestingly. He reveals just enough of the 'content' to make it interesting and meaningful, provides the necessary background information, biographical details about the author, etc.

The teacher should try to instil, in the student, a desire to read and *find out for himself*. A certain suspense has to be created. The teacher must, therefore, refrain from telling the student too much in advance.

(*b*) *Premliinary discussion*

The teacher introduces the text *indirectly* through questions which lead the students on to the ideas, etc. in the text. He makes use of what the student already knows (perhaps from earlier reading). At the appropriate stage, he invites the students to read and follow up the discussion.

(*c*) *'Before'-questions (or 'motivating' questions)*

The preliminary discussion (prior to reading) takes the form of a specific problem or question, to which the student must find the answer through reading. The teacher frames the question clearly, after some initial exposition and/or discussion, and writes it up on the black-board. He tells the students that the answer to this question is to be found in the text, and asks them to look for it.

Such 'before'-questions make the activity of reading more purposive by directing attention, in advance, to a particular set of facts. 'Before'-questions are an aid to comprehension; like all other aids provided to the student, they should gradually be withdrawn.

We have suggested only a few of the activities that could precede reading. There are other possibilities too. The teacher may, for example, read out a part of the text aloud, and ask his students to follow this up with their own (silent) reading. It is important, however, that no single technique be used all the time. There must be no set rituals in teaching.

The reading of the text

The act of reading provides the main exposure to the language. The student is expected to read with understanding. This skill appears to be simple, but it is not. It can, however, be developed through practice.

To a large extent, the speed of reading is linked up with facility of comprehension. The slow reader is 'word-bound' : for him, the unit of comprehension is the sentence, which he pieces together from the words. But the unit of comprehension should be the 'idea', which may extend over several sentences or over a whole paragraph. The student should be able to cut up (mentally) a length of text into its logical units, which involves the perception of relationships between sentences and groups of sentences. He needs a fairly sophisticated *understanding* of syntax before he can come up to this level. But he can be trained to read for ideas rather than for words—and this involves a faster kind of reading.

The teacher aims, therefore, at improving both speed of reading and depth and quality of understanding. Speed is improved by requiring the student to read against time-limits, and pacing him. The quality of understanding is improved through exercise which is progressive in character. Thus exercise in comprehension forms the next part of the 'method' but it *may* be preceded (again, there is no rigidity) by some teaching of vocabulary and syntax.

Presentation of language items from the text, before comprehension

Students should be trained to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words from their contexts and not depend excessively on explanations. When there are too many 'new' words, however, they cumulatively block the student's understanding. The teacher must, in these cases, remove at least some of the blocks *before* the student can negotiate the text. The same is true of

difficult syntax occurring in the text and likely to cause loss of comprehension.

This 'teaching' of vocabulary and syntax from the text is for recognition rather than for active use.

Vocabulary. At this point, the teacher introduces only the 'ad-hoc' vocabulary : those items occurring in the text which he judges not to be necessary either for active use or for inclusion in the student's reading vocabulary. ('Ad-hoc' vocabulary is that which is required only for the moment, and not likely to be needed thereafter.)

The teacher deals with 'ad-hoc' vocabulary by supplying word-glosses in English, or mother-tongue equivalents. It is advisable to have these cyclostyled and distributed in advance.

Syntax. Some times a particular pattern is frequently used in a text because it is crucial to the meaning. (e. g., the use of conditionals, modals, etc.). The student may not know the significance of this pattern, and in such a case his comprehension would be hampered. The teacher should, therefore, introduce such patterns in other, more easily understood contexts *before* asking the student to read the text. This applies also to the syntactic patterns likely to cause ambiguity (e.g., *or*, which can indicate synonymy as well as choice).

(3) Exercise by the Student

(i) *Comprehension Exercise*.

The text is divided by the teacher into units (one paragraph or more) and the students are asked to read through a particular unit. 'Before-questions' may be given if the teacher so wishes.

After reading (to a time-limit), students answer comprehension questions orally. The questions, though planned in advance, should appear to come *naturally*, in some kind of chain.

It is not possible to describe here in detail the types of questions that can be asked. Basically, they are :-

(a) questions requiring factual answers—information directly available in the text;

(b) questions requiring answers to be inferred from the text;

(c) questions requiring the selection, arrangement, interpretation etc. of information available in the text.

There are elementary as well as higher-order skills of comprehension. Some of those verge on critical or literary response to language; at this point, the teaching of language and literature come close to each other.

Comprehension may proceed from the general to the particular, or vice versa; there can be no rigidity here.

(*ii*) *Oral discussion following the reading activity*

This part of the teaching is very important as it is here that the teacher can promote stimulating language activity. He should initiate discussion into different aspects of the text : the content, the manner of presentation, the attitudes displayed, etc. Students may be shy of speaking as they are afraid of committing mistakes. The teacher draws them out, suggesting ideas, providing cues, helping them out with words they may be groping for, putting half-formulated thoughts into sentences the students *might* produce, etc. He corrects grammatical errors on the spot, tactfully. It is important, however, that the student be given the opportunity of expressing himself, even though this involves his committing errors.

Initially, the discussion is between the teacher and the students. Later, it can be turned over entirely to the students, with the teacher as an observer.

Oral discussion should form the link between reading (which precedes it) and the writing activity to follow. It provides practice in comprehension. grammar and vocabulary and the skills of speaking and debate.

(*iii*) *Vocabulary expansion and development*

We have already indicated how the teacher can deal with the 'ad-hoc' vocabulary before reading begins.

In general, we would like students to make the effort to read and guess the meanings of words before the teacher comes to their aid. After the reading, the teacher can take up selected items of vocabulary for ***teaching***. It is better, we feel, for the teacher to decide which items need teaching than to depend on the students to come up with their difficulties. (Students are liable to come up with all kinds of difficulties, real and imaginary, if invited to do so).

Too much time is spent, usually, on 'explaining' difficult words from the text. Here, the teacher must confine himself to the bare minimum which he judges to be necessary and useful for the student.

Words needed for the passive or reading vocabulary should be established, by presenting them in several different meaningful contexts. Words needed for the active vocabulary must, in addition to the above, be drilled and exercised by the students.

(*iv*) *Grammar exercise*

Such teaching of grammar as the teacher chooses to do should be initiated during the oral discussion stage.

The 'excuse' for teaching grammar may be provided by some passage in the text, or something said by a student (perhaps a typical error committed) during the discussion.

Grammar teaching at this level is mainly for remediation, revision and consolidation. It is built around particular areas of usage. The most common ones requiring teaching are :-

1. Verbs: the tense-system, particularly the use of the simple present, the continuous present, the present perfect, the past perfect and the continuous past.
2. The modals : will/shall, may/can, etc.
3. The articles—especially the use of a/the.
4. Subject/verb and noun/pronoun concord.
5. Prepositions.
6. Question forms : 'yes/no' type and 'Wh'—type.
7. Reported speech, including reported questions, commands, requests.
8. Sentence linking—co-ordination and subordination.

At the college level grammar teaching is not just pattern-practice : it involves illustration, discussion, explanation, etc. Comparisons with the mother-tongue are useful. But in any case, there *has* to be plenty of exercise—oral and written.

A question sometimes raised is : should the grammar teaching form a separate phase, to follow reading and comprehension, or should it be done *during* comprehension and discussion?

There can be no single answer to this. In general, we prefer the activity of reading and comprehension to be continuous. If there is too much of incidental language teaching (especially of grammar), this tends to distract from the comprehension activity. It may be better, in some

cases, to reserve the teaching of grammar for the end. After a piece of text has been thoroughly understood and discussed, the students may be asked to go through it again, concentrating on striking or significant grammatical patterns, which are then discussed, explained or practised. (It is at this stage that the workbook could be used).

But in those classes where the level of proficiency in grammar is particularly low, it may be better to combine grammar with comprehension and discussion. Here, the teacher deals with grammatical patterns *as* they occur in the text, illustrates them through other examples of his own (presented situationally), then explains and practises them. Reading and comprehension are slowed down, consequently–but for the weaker student, exercise in grammar is felt to be as important as comprehension.

Written work

We feel *every* lesson should include some writing activity by the students. Too often, we find students *talking away glibly* and doing no writing at all.

All writing in the class should, however, follow and ***reinforce*** oral activity.

Writing, like oral practice, is directed towards proficiency in comprehension, vocabulary and grammar. In addition, it can help develop the skills of summarising and composition.

Initially, all writing relates to the text and the oral discussion arising from it. This motivates students to make the effort to write. Later, they may undertake writing not related to the text.

This writing may take the form of, for example, *summaries* of the pieces from the text. Most students find these summaries valuable for the examination, and they gladly co-operate in the production of summaries.

In the usual college situation, the teacher produces his own summary and dictates it to the students, who proceed to memorise it. Here however, we want the students to prepare the summary, *collectively*, with the teacher's help and guidance.

The teacher may piece the summary together from the answers given by the students to his questions during comprehension work. (The questions should be so framed that the answers add up to a neat summary.) The teacher gets an oral answer to his question from some student, repeats

it aloud for the whole class to hear, then asks for (and himself offers) suggestions for improving it. Errors in grammar, if any, are corrected by other students or, if necessary, by the teacher himself.

When the teacher is satisfied with the answer, he writes it up on the board and asks the students to copy it in their exercise books. The next answer, similarly elicited and written up, forms a sequel to the first answer and so on. In this way, the entire summary is written and copied out by the students.

What we have just suggested is an outline for a guided composition—which is what all writing should be, at this stage. This does not permit *all* the students to express themselves independently, but this disadvantage is offset in other ways.

Writing of this kind can be frankly examination-oriented, and the students will find this a strong motivating factor.

There can be variations of this activity. Sometimes we could ask the students to write imaginatively on their text. For example, a story from the textbook could be re-written from another point of view (narrated by one of the characters, using first-person narrative) or with a different kind of ending.

Later, as we have suggested, writing unrelated to the texts can be attempted (e. g. letters, reports, dialogues, etc.) However, students should *never*, as a rule, be asked to write on topics which are of no interest to them. It is a good idea to let *them* suggest the topics—although these suggestions can be motivated and guided by the teacher. Again, written composition should only follow oral discussion and, if possible, reading suggested by the teacher.

Composition should be integrated closely with grammar. An entire composition can, for example, be built up around a pattern (e. g. 'if'-clauses.

Conclusion

We have indicated above only a skeleton for college mehodology; if we went into greater detail, an entire teacher's manual would be required. Reduced to cold print, this method may look rather stereotyped and mechanical. We certainly would not claim any originality for it. The things we have said may all have been said before. It has been our attempt, however, to present things in a clearly-visualised and principled framework, appropriate for the college level.

Of the teaching techniques in common use today, not one can really be considered as revolutionary. Properly used, however, they are capable of producing the desired results. We have reason to hope that an important break-through may occur with developments in educational technology, which would make it possible to combine the advantages of mass dissemination with those of individualized instruction. When such developments arrive, language methodology will be radically transformed; but for the present, the old techniques are good enough.

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